

From California.

We have now been in California two months and a half, and are beginning to feel that we belong to this State, or, at least, that we are living here instead of Ohio. We often think of the dear ones there and elsewhere in the East, where our tent has been pitched; and you can scarcely imagine with what eagerness we take up the EVANGELIST each week, and search it for familiar names and places, and other things in which we feel interested. And as we are so anxious to hear from those we know and love, it has occurred to me that others might be pleased to hear from us. I will therefore say to all concerned that we are all enjoying good health, and are trying to be useful and happy.

We live half a mile north of Lathrop, San Joaquin county, which is one of the central counties of the State, and is in the heart of the great San Joaquin and Sacramento valleys. Lathrop is a small railroad town at the juncture of the San Francisco and Sacramento divisions of the Central Pacific railway. It is on the east side of the San Joaquin river; which is navigable the whole year. The Brethren have an interest in a Union church at this place, and we have an interesting Sunday school, and preaching twice a month. Elder J. P. Wolfe is the superintendent; but during harvest, sister Beer has been selected to take charge of the school, while brother W. is on the "West side" attending to his harvest there.

Besides the Lathrop appointment, we have regular meetings at East Union, three miles southeast; Ripon, 10 miles southeast; New Jerusalem, 15 miles southwest; Byron, 26 miles west; Marsh Creek, 35 miles west; and Chaparral, 35 miles northeast. It will be seen that my work is considerably scattered. Marsh Creek and Byron are in Contra Costa county, and Chaparral in Calaveras.

During harvest, which may last another month, we can do no more than fill regular appointments. It would be useless to try to have a protracted meeting anywhere until "the harvest is past." I would like to give you some idea of harvesting in California, but I scarcely know where to begin or where to end. But suppose you take your position on Mt. Diablo, a peak of the Coast Range, about forty miles west of this place. First, you will look westward to get a glimpse of the Pacific Ocean. Next you will look upon the mountain peaks, canons and foot-hills around you. Then you will look to the northeast into the great Sacramento Valley, and soon you will look to the east and on to the south east, as far as your eyes can stretch, and you will involuntarily exclaim, "Oh, beautiful, wonderful sea of golden grain!" You will gloat your admiration, and then you will wonder how all this harvesting can be done. Now come down into the valley and we will see.

First, we find a crew of men running a header. There are six, eight or ten horses abreast, and the machine running ahead of them. There is a helmsman to raise or lower the machine and to direct its course. The heads are taken off including one-third, more or less of the straw, and by an endless revolving sheet, or apron, carried to one side up through a chute, elevated six to eight feet at the outer end, from which they drop into the header wagon-bed. There are two of these each drawn by four horses and manned by a driver and binder, with each machine. When one of these wagons is loaded, the machine is stopped until the loaded wagon is driven out and an empty one in, and then proceeds, while the loaded wagon is driven to the stack and unloaded. There are different ways of doing this, which I will not pause to describe. But you ask, "What is that other big wagon for that is standing still in the field, and looks like a railroad car?" Sure enough! don't you see the stove-pipe? That is a harvest kitchen. Likely there is a Chinaman in it for a cook. Don't you see it is noon now, the machine has stopped, the horses are fed, and the men are going into this boarding tent to eat their dinner? By one o'clock the machine will be running again. There you will see a pile of valises and blankets; and you will understand that when night comes every man takes his blanket and makes his bed wherever it suits him best. Those little, white packages are mosquito-bars. In some places they are not needed; but where they are, four stakes are set, the bar is thrown over them so as to look like a "whited sepulcher," and the living mortal crawls in and sleeps like a king. There are hundreds of such machines and crews of men and horses in these valleys. I should have said that a machine cuts from twelve to twenty feet wide, and from twenty-five to forty acres in a day.

You ask, "Is that a stack? Yes, sir; that is a stack—a California stack. Of course, it is a hundred feet square, and only 8 or 10 feet high, and seems to be lowest in the middle, and you wouldn't call it a stack in Ohio; but

it is a stack—a good stack—in California. You see it don't rain here from June till November, and as soon as they begin to harvest they begin to thresh, and before the early rains come, these stacks will all be threshed and the grain in warehouses. The ships of the ocean will be freighted with it, and it will be found in European mills and flour chests before the rains come.

We are lucky. Here comes the threshing machine with its crew and equipments down to the moveable dining hall and mosquito-bars. They are here and in ten minutes they will be at work. Did you ever see such a machine and such threshing? This must be seen to be understood. A twenty-four horse power engine, a forty-inch cylinder, a derrick with two sets of block and tackle and men and horses to drag the grain up to the machine, two men, one with a hook and the other with a fork, throw the grain into a chute, through which it is carried ten or twelve feet to the mouth of the machine, a peculiar construction of elbows, slides and forks to stuff it into the machine, a wonderful windmill, one man to attend to the filling sacks, and two to sew them up and pile them up, and another man with a team to drag the straw away. Did you ever see "its likes"? In a few hours that splendid stack will be gone, and the machine too. Wherever night comes upon them, they feed, eat their supper, make their beds, put up their mosquito huts, if necessary, and go to sleep.

But let us drive down a mile or two, to an adjoining ranch, and see how they do it there. Here we are. This beats all the machines yet. This is a Combined Harvester. It is so called because it cuts, and threshes and sacks the grain as it goes. Four men with sixteen to twenty horses cut and thresh forty acres a day. The machine we are now looking at is brother Houser's invention, manufactured in his own shops at Stockton, this county. He has sent out about fifty this season. There are others manufacturing similar machines, so that there are hundreds of these in these valleys. You see wherever we go there are wonderful machines, droves of horses and crowds of men. The town and cities are drained of surplus men. And thus the work goes on "from early dawn to dusky eve, for days and weeks and months." This is a faint description of harvesting in California.

When Sunday comes, many are away from home, men and horses are tired, and comparatively few attend preaching anywhere. This is not a necessary consequence but a general result. Many work all week, and on Sunday they find strength, disposition, ways and means to go from five to ten miles to a saloon or beer garden, but the Christian is too much exhausted or too little concerned to go half the distance to church or Sunday school. It remains to be seen how much allowance the Lord will make for California Christians. But time will greatly modify these things here. Eventually these large ranches will be cut up into small farms. Then they will farm less and better. The harvesting will be done in two weeks instead of two months; and the long, dry season, with its cool and refreshing nights, will be devoted to the worship and praise of God. There will be improved methods of Christian labor, and the great harvest of souls will be gathered. California will be reclaimed from the power of the devil, and will be a province of our heavenly King. May the Lord hasten the day. More anon.

J. W. BEER.

Lathrop, Cal.

Reckless Assertions Reviewed.

In No. 29 of BRETHREN'S EVANGELIST, brother C. H. Balsbaugh, on the topic "What is truth," asks this question: "How do we know that Jesus was begotten of God?" In answer to this question we find him to say, "By the quality and form of his life." How should we know what this is were it not for the Bible? Why did brother B. not say,—by the revelation God gave to man through the testimony of the Holy Spirit—"Even the spirit of truth proceeding from the Father." "He shall testify of me," said Jesus, (John, 15: 26.) as also he did. Math., 1: 18, 20. Quality and form in the life of Jesus are the inevitable outgrowth of hereditary transmission, as set forth in the adage, "like begets like." God the Father, God the Holy Spirit, on the side of divinity, the Virgin Mary, on the side of humanity; the Holy Child Jesus born, divinity and humanity blended—Emmanuel—God with us—the incarnation God manifested in the flesh.

Again brother B. says: "Manifestation invariably demonstrates origin." Invariably? Not correct. For instance, in John 3: 8, we have from Jesus "The wind bloweth (spirit breatheth) where it listeth, thou hearest the sound (manifestation) thereof, but canst not tell whence it cometh and whither it goeth." So is every one that is born of the spirit." Any amount of manifestation when the wind blows, but science, nor all the schools of the

day ever yet have demonstrated the origin of wind. In the religion of the Bible there is any amount of manifestation, as on Pentecost, men who were murderers before became saints afterwards, but that never demonstrated the origin of the spirit that brought about the wondrous change in the thousands of hearts that day.

Again, brother B. asserts that "No man can educate himself into the character and fellowship of God, even with the Bible for his only guide." We agree in part with this assertion, especially where one's own efforts seeking the divine relationship are without the grace of God; but by the help of God, by His book, His revelation—the Bible—"The lamp to His feet," the "light to his pathway," man receiving the truth in his heart as the "incorruptible seed" is begotten of God, in the exercise of faith and repentance, and being born of water and of the spirit he comes forth a new creature in Christ Jesus having passed in his conversion all "moments of radical contact with God," guaranteeing to him a life hid with God in Christ giving him all the assurance of "a new principle, a new impetus, a new direction" as implied in the term "born of God." But is this education "into the character and fellowship of God" "without the Bible?" So asserts brother B. going even farther than all that, saying that "Bible alone religion may be no better than Buddhism." Well we may have no proper conception of the religion of Buddhism—of its high standard of morals and its elevating tendency upon humanity, but we look upon this assertion as monstrous. Show us a case,—just one case,—of concession that Deity has promised to accept since the investiture of the sacred canon—the Old and New Testament scriptures—without the aid and agency of the Bible or the word preached therefrom, and we will rejoice with brother B. in the new discovery. In conversion, mysterious "radical contact between God and man" without the directing agency of the Bible is a new, or another gospel, and if reliable will save the press and the pulpit much work and thought. Let the missionaries in the wilds of Africa, and the jungles of India, in the antiquated isles of China and Japan, in the thousand isles of the sea, all come home with all the Bibles, as a "moment of radical contact between God and man" will do, for life and salvation. Stop printing or revising the good old book, and save the millions of dollars that its spread and teaching will cost, for it has been discovered that it fails as an educator "to character and fellowship with God," as man's only guide or channel for the communication of the Holy Spirit, for it has been asserted with great swelling words that "Bible alone religion may be no better than Buddhism." But perhaps brother Balsbaugh was only aiming a play of words at the Bible-alone Brethren church. Will he rise and explain? Echo answers explain. E. S. MILLER.

Hagerstown, Ind.

The Unpardonable Sin.

The unpardonable sin or sin against the Holy Ghost has created quite a lively interest in the brotherhood, scarcely two agreeing. We are pleased, however, to see that Christian regard for each other's views that is apparent in the several articles already penned on the subject. We will also take the liberty of giving to the readers of the EVANGELIST our views on this subject.

According to our convictions, brother Ridenour has reached the base. Brother Davis claims, that no one living can commit the above named sin—that it is impossible for man to crucify again the son of God. We should keep before our minds the fact that Paul so states, and it is a little dangerous to step in a little ahead of the gospel.

See Hebrews, 6: 6. "If they shall fall away, to renew them again to repentance, seeing they crucify to themselves the son of God afresh and put him to an open shame." We have before us one that was once enlightened, having tasted the Heavenly gift, and made a partaker of the Holy Ghost. He even had tasted the good word of God, and the powers of the world, or age to come. If he should fall away it is impossible to renew him again to repentance; but crucifies to himself, not to the world, the son of God afresh, and by so doing puts him to an open or public shame. How much worse can the sin against the Holy Ghost be to any dying man than the condition above stated? A second argument is drawn from Hebrews, 10: 26, 27, 28, 29. We regard that if it ever was possible for man to commit that sin it still is. We fail to see the logic that it cannot be committed, for Christ says there is only one sin that is unpardonable. In this case we have one presented that is guilty of a willful sin. By this we understand a sin that was fully comprehended before it was committed. Committing a sin when knowing it is to be a sin at or before its com-

mittal, there is no more sacrifice for such sins. No, but on the contrary, a certain fearful looking for judgment,—fiery indignation which shall destroy the adversaries or enemies, and they who thus act are Christ's enemies.

See how he illustrates the case in verse 28: "He that despised Moses' law died without mercy under two or three witnesses. It would seem hard to die for any cause in the absence of all mercy. Such were the rulings under the law, verse 29. "Of how much sorer punishment, suppose ye, shall he be thought worthy," or merit, that sins willfully by treading under foot God's son. He even was sanctified by so doing and counts the blood of the covenant an unholy thing. Yea, even more than this. He even does despite unto the spirit of grace; what is this doing, despite unto the spirit of grace, by a sanctified person, but sinning against the Holy Ghost? We really would make no difference between the sin against the Holy Ghost as described by the Savior and the persons described in Hebrews, 6: 4 and 10: 26. To pass through a judgment of fiery indignation, and be devoured and go through a punishment worse than one of no mercy, is equal to no pardon in our estimation. A. P. GIBSON.

A Visit to Rockingham County, Virginia.

At the request of the Brethren of East Rockingham county, Virginia, I left my home in West Virginia, Thursday, July 17th Arriving in Harrisonburg, July 19th, met brother Koontz at the depot waiting for me with a conveyance. After a pleasant drive of about seven miles, we reached his home, and were happy to meet with so kind a family, who at once made us feel at home. In the evening, in company with brother Koontz and family, we were taken to the Mountain Grove church. Here we met brother James A. Ride our, who requested us to preach, which we did as best we could after our tiresome journey. After preaching, in company with brother James, we were conducted to brother Maidens. Next morning, being the Sabbath, we were taken to Pinesville. Here we had the pleasure of witnessing the interesting manner in which the Brethren there conduct their Sabbath schools. After Sabbath school your unworthy servant preached to a crowded house, on the subject of "Faith, Hope and Charity." Had the best of order and attention for which we return our thanks. From here we were taken to Sunnyside by brother Berry. Here, for the first time since our meeting, we enjoyed the privilege of hearing brother James preach. His theme was "The Unpardonable Sin." There was a good attendance, and the audience listened attentively, unanimously pronouncing it an excellent sermon. Met again Tuesday evening, July 22nd, at Sunnyside, and preached to a crowded house. Spent some days among the Brethren here, and was conveyed to brother Maidens by brother Wm. Rippetto. From here we went to Mountain Grove church. Attended Sabbath school at three o'clock, p. m., after which I preached. From here we were taken to Pineville, where brother James preached in the evening. Monday evening brother James preached for us again. Tuesday 29th, brother Maiden took us to Harrisonburg, and then we went to brother Joseph Bowman's. Wednesday, 30th, brother Bowman took us to the depot. From thence homeward.

In conclusion, I wish to thank those dear brethren and sisters for their kindness, liberality and hospitality shown us during our short stay among them. May the good Lord help them to be faithful and zealous laborers in the Master's vineyard, and to press forward the conquest till Jesus shall be proclaimed "King of Kings, and Lord of Lords."

A. M. RIDENOUR.

Albrightsville, W. Va.

Favorite Preachers.

Speaking of the curious and unseemly custom, which at one time was common in churches, of applauding favorite preachers, Dr. Johnson instances the cases of Burnet and Sprat, two eminent rival divines.

"When Burnet preached," he says "part of his congregation hummed so loudly and so long that he sat down to enjoy it, and rubbed his face with his handkerchief. When Sprat preached, he likewise was honored with a like animating hum; but he stretched out his hand to the congregation, and cried: 'Peace, peace! I pray you, peace!'" Once, when Burnet preached out his hour glass, which he always kept by him in the pulpit, "he took it up and held it aloft in his hand, and then turned up for another hour, upon which the audience set up almost a cry of joy!"

Say as little as possible of yourself and those who are near you.

Be thankful for the least and the best will often come to your share.